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## Notes: Lenten Address: The Cross and Your Prayers (1 Timothy 2:5), 1962

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DATE 3/28/62 OCCASION Lent. 1 Tim. 2, 5

N.B. 1  
"For there is one God and one mediator between  
God and men. The man Christ Jesus"

THEME The Cross - and your Prayers

- CE 1963
1. For several days I have been wondering if any of you would consider it blasphemous if I would ask you tonight to do a strange and unusual thing: topic: "the Cross and your prayers" - in order to get hold of that theme ~~time~~ I must ask you for a moment to imagine that you are God - only by doing this - by imagining that for a few moments ~~that~~ you are in the place of God can you grasp the deep, inner, eternal connection between that pile of wood outside the gate of Jerusalem 2000 years ago and the prayer you said this morning as you began the day. So: imagine that you are God - and suddenly the Universe is full of voices, begging, pleading, crying - and history is crowded with heads, begging, pleading, reaching - asking for something that you can give.
  2. Can you now imagine the incredible burden the prayers of all mankind place upon the heart of God? It <sup>all</sup> began thousands of years ago - in the garden in the cool of the day - then came from the lips of a wife and patriarchs and prophets - from the children of the covenant - from that Man Jesus kneeling before a baby in a cave - then the flood of prayer poured for a moment for a single lonely prayer - "Father, forgive them, etc." and then it really began - day by day for

DATE 3/28/62 OCCASION \_\_\_\_\_

THEME The Cross and your Prayers.

3. And yet - it really remains a mystery - what am I saying? I am saying that the power which spins the earth and the stars through interstellar space and whirles the infinitesimal particles within each atom - the power which pulsates in the sun and rain and life and death. this power can be approached by me asking for relief from pain or forgiveness for the careless gossip I spread yesterday - one thing is sure - not all the religions of ancient Greece & Rome - as well as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism never dreamed of this
4. And if you ask why not? the answer is that a man - like us - called Christ Jesus hung upon a cross and died with a prayer on His lips - and by that death and by that prayer <sup>He</sup> became the great single Voice in the Universe which supports our prayers - for there is one God and one mediator between God and men - the man Christ Jesus - on our knees we are never alone - there is always this other Voice speaking for us and with us - the Voice and the Man Who has earned the right to pray for us - to be our Mediator - because He gave His soul unto death and took us away from a silent, useless, prayerless life by His prayerful death! "Father, forgive."
5. So - here is the divine answer to the great mystery. this is the deep, inner connection between the Cross and our prayers - the Cross has given us the power to pray - a person



DATE 3/28/68 OCCASION \_\_\_\_\_THEME The Cross and your Prayers.

to pray with us and a Mediator to pray for us - and so we have John Donne, priest to the King on the first Sunday in Lent 1627 saying in the middle of a gentle sermon on the Gospel, suddenly ~~reminding~~<sup>this</sup> and thrusting himself upon God: "By the Cross - forgive me, O Lord, O Lord, forgive me my sins, the sins of my youth and my present sins - Forgive me my crying sins and my whispering sins - you see, this must always come first - because this - <sup>the forgiveness of sins</sup> and this alone - establishes the communion between the Cross and your prayers.

6. And now bring it down to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century - all agree that modern (or post-modern) man's thought is full of a sense of doom, of the fragility of existence, of man's finitude, of the unpredictability of life and history - is a word full of anxiety - and why? Matthew Arnold saw it coming - this age of unfaith and fear - 100 years ago:

"The world which seems

To lie before us like a land of dream  
So various, so beautiful, so new

Itath really neither joy, nor love, nor light  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
- Scept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
- Where ignorant armies clash by night"  
Now, do you want to get away from all this -

DATE 3/28/62 OCCASION \_\_\_\_\_THEME The Cross and your Prayers

this conspiracy of darkness & of fear - this cosmic loneliness - then there is only one thing to do - tonight, tomorrow, sometime, sometime you must come to see a man die - and by knowing why He died you will, I promise you, enter a new and lovely world - a world where you can be good with God - where you can be poor with Christ's poor - despised with Christ despised - accounted <sup>foolish</sup> foolish for His sake - and yet, by His grace, become so good that He becomes a bigger for your heart - so that you too can join Him in pardoning the unpardonable - loving the unlovable, and forgiving the unforgivable - until at last following that grace toward glory, you become utterly <sup>personally</sup> this -

7. We may well ask: Why, after all that confidence are there still so many men and women who turn away from this new world of the Cross and pass to live and die without God - without Christ - without hope? One cause of course is that in our post-modern world there is a new kind of atheism - in fact the words atheist, godless are no longer adequate - they seem to point to a life without God - while the post-modern atheism is a life opposed to God - a new, practical, <sup>aggressive</sup> aggressive opposition to God - an effort to drive Him out of the Universe and out of the hearts of men - the ancient fool said in his heart "There is no God" - the post-modern fool says: "I am against God - he is still



DATE 3/28/62 OCCASION \_\_\_\_\_THEME The Cross and your Prayers

Standing around the Cross, jeering and mocking,  
and, shall I say, just a little frightened <sup>now</sup>  
that this whole business might be true - that  
this torn and brown figure is really God -  
and that by earning the power to save He  
has also earned the power to judge -

8. However that may be, there are probably  
few, if any, of those post-modern atheists  
here tonight - if I thought there were, I  
would stop talking about the Cross and  
prayer and such foolish things and say something  
about Sinai and sin - about the long, slow,  
terrible way God has of coming back in history  
and in life to judge what He could not save -

I would probably end this sermon - 34 years after  
three decades after the Cross, my hard Christ -

9. But this is really not our problem here  
tonight. our problem is indifference - <sup>some of us</sup> ~~we~~ really  
don't care much one way or the other about  
the thorn-covered figure on the Cross - we

offer Him a little lip service - come to Lenten  
services a little haunted by the ghastly figure  
of the lonely sufferer - bringing out of this  
Chapel a vague, uneasy feeling that He knew  
something which life & time have taken away -  
a restless strength - a far hope - a  
continuing dream - of righteousness and goodness  
and love which we have never really known -

10. And so we adopt the other post-modern